

Title	Variation of Word Order in the Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales
Author(s)	Tajiri, Masaji
Citation	大阪外国語大学論集. 2 p.39-p.52
Issue Date	1990-03-31
oaire:version	VoR
URL	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/11094/79478">https://hdl.handle.net/11094/79478</a>
rights	
Note	

*Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA*

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/>

Osaka University

Variation of Word Order  
in the Manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*\*

Masaji TAJIRI

『カンタベリ物語』諸写本に見られる語順の異同について

田 尻 雅 士

英詩の父チャョーサーは統語法にも文体的技巧を凝らしたと言われる。本稿では詩人の代表作『カンタベリ物語』（c.1387—1400）の15世紀の諸写本において、写字生達が、初期写本では保たれているチャョーサーの韻文的語順にどのような反応を示したかを、いくつかの観点から分析する。その結果、①語順のヴァリエントは15世紀も後期になるにつれ増加している、②ヴァリエントは行端よりも行中央部に現れることが圧倒的に多く、脚韻に支障をきたすことは稀である、③断定はしにくい、写字生にはチャョーサーの詩行を散文的に書き改める傾向が一応認められる、④その際、韻律をある程度犠牲にしていることが多い、⑤しかし文意に変化が生じたり、解釈が困難になっているヴァリエントは意外に少ない、⑥ただし文体面では微妙な影響が及んでいることがある、といった事実が認められた。

0.

Recent advances in studies in the textual tradition of the *Canterbury Tales* are undoubtedly remarkable. It seems, however, that students have not shown due concern for variation of syntax found among the MSS. "One major...area of the scribes' implicitly critical response to the nature of Chaucer's poetry," according to B. A. Windeatt, "involves the marked variableness over word-order which is found in the mss. Variation over word-order within Chaucer's verse lines is one of the most frequent differences between mss."<sup>(1)</sup> He adduces some examples from *Troilus and Criseyde* without any statistical data. The present study aims to make a thorough investigation of word order variants in all the extant manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* and to show how fifteenth century scribes responded to the poet's elaborate verses.<sup>(2)</sup>

The tales examined are “General Prologue”, “The Knight’s Tale”, “The Pardoner’s Prologue and Tale”, and “The Nun’s Priest’s Prologue and Tale”—a total of 4,444 lines. Since no authorial holograph is extant, we turn for our base text to *The Riverside Chaucer* essentially based on the Ellesmere MS.<sup>(3)</sup> Readings in disagreement with those adopted by the editor are collected from Manly and Rickert’s eight-volume edition.<sup>(4)</sup>

1.

In total 5,060 word order variants are counted in fifty-nine MSS. which contain at least one of the four tales.

Table 1<sup>(6)</sup>

Period	15c in	15c 1/4	15c 2/4	15c med	15c 3/4	15c 4/4
Number of variants in each MS.	El 7	Cp 61	Ad <sup>2</sup> △ 55	Ds 96	Bo <sup>1</sup> 100	Ad <sup>1</sup> 94
	Hg 16	Dd 52	Ad <sup>3</sup> 44	Ha <sup>2</sup> 85	Bw 87	Gl 91
		Ha <sup>4</sup> 96	Bo <sup>2</sup> △ 48	Ha <sup>3</sup> 131	Ch 35	Ld <sup>2</sup> △ 94
	Ad <sup>4</sup> —	La 83	En <sup>1</sup> 77	Ht 129	Cn 130	Ma 124
	Me△ 1		En <sup>2</sup> △ 49	Mc△ 16	Dl 133	Tc <sup>2</sup> 146
			Gg 33	Mg 97	En <sup>3</sup> 96	
			He△ 66	Mm 96	Fi 153	Cx <sup>1</sup> 151
			Hk△ 49	Ra <sup>1</sup> △ 23	Ha <sup>5</sup> △ 17	
			li 160	Ra <sup>3</sup> 74	Ne 125	Ct —
			Lc 84	Tc <sup>1</sup> 132	Nl 168	Ee —
			Ld <sup>1</sup> 87		Ph <sup>2</sup> 93	Hl <sup>3</sup> —
			Ln 113	Ar —	Py 120	Hn —
			Ph <sup>3</sup> △ 72	Np —	Ra <sup>2</sup> 88	Pp —
			Ps 133	Ox —	Ry <sup>1</sup> 123	Ra <sup>4</sup> —
			Pw 85	St —	Se 93	Si —
			Ry <sup>2</sup> 83		To 65	Sl <sup>3</sup> —
			Sl <sup>1</sup> 80			Tc <sup>3</sup> —
			Sl <sup>2</sup> 124		Do —	
					Ha <sup>1</sup> △ 35	
			Ds <sup>2</sup> —		Hl <sup>1</sup> —	
			Hl <sup>4</sup> —		Hl <sup>2</sup> —	
			Kk —		Ll <sup>1</sup> △ 62	
			Ll —		Ph <sup>1</sup> —	
			Pl —		Ph <sup>4</sup> —	
Total	24	292	1,442	879	1,723	700
Number of MSS.	2.2	4	16.3	8.9	16.6	5.8
Per MS.	10.9	73	88.5	98.8	103.8	120.7

Grand total of variants: 5,060      Number of MSS.: 53.8  
Number of variants per MS.: 94.1

It is to be noted that the number of variants exhibits a sharp increase in the latter half of the century. The MS. with the largest number of variants is Nl(Northumberland 455), which, as S. Ono reports, also contains the largest number of variants of 'shall' and 'will'.<sup>(6)</sup> On the other hand Ch(Christ Church 152), though produced at about the same time as Nl, preserves to a considerable extent word order patterns in early MSS.<sup>(7)</sup>

It is interesting to note that the variation of word order very rarely involves verse head or rime. This is because "[i]f a scribe copied by memorizing one line at a time, his allegiance to his copy would be strongest at the beginning of the line and at the rhyme, with its own mnemonic effect" and "[t]he scribe's accuracy to his copy would be least strong precisely in that central area of the line...."<sup>(8)</sup> Our statistics show that only 221 variants (4.4%) occur at the beginning of the line (112 variants; 2.2%) or at the rime (109 variants; 2.2%). When variants occur at the rime, the rime scheme is often kept intact, either by altering the rime fellow as in,

- (1) Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour [:socour](KnT, 917)...honour and  
your glorie [:mercy](La)<sup>(9)</sup>

or by involving no alteration of the rime fellow, as in,

- (2) My deere freend, bitwixen me and thee[:be](PardT, 832)...thee and me (Ad<sup>2</sup>, 37  
other MSS.)

## 2.

In what follows we will examine some frequent types of word order variants. Windeatt writes, "Variations in the middle of lines often suggest that while the line was being held in the scribe's mind, it tended to revert to a more familiar word-order than Chaucer had originally given it.... The responses of the scribes can enable modern readers to gain some sense of how the order of Chaucer's lines distinguished itself to contemporary readers as 'poetic' and 'difficult' when set against the expectations of more ordinary written English."<sup>(10)</sup> Does "a more familiar word-order" mean a prose word order? Table 2 shows how frequently some particular types of variation are to be found in the MSS. classified according to the production date. The figures in parentheses are the numbers of variants per MS. Examples of each type of variation are given below.

Table 2

I: independent clause

D: dependent clause

Period Type	in	1/4	2/4	med	3/4	4/4	Total		
a	3 (1.4)	37 (9.3)	205 (12.6)	127 (14.3)	217 (13.1)	86 (14.8)	675 (12.5)	I:538 (10)	D:137 (2.5)
b	4 (1.8)	29 (7.3)	144 (8.8)	88 (9.9)	217 (13.1)	80 (13.8)	562 (10.4)	I:536 (9.9)	D:26 (0.5)
c	0 (0)	17 (4.3)	118 (7.2)	72 (8.1)	166 (10)	51 (8.8)	424 (7.9)	I:233 (4.3)	D:191 (3.6)
d	1 (0.5)	14 (3.5)	43 (2.6)	20 (2.2)	66 (4.0)	29 (5)	173 (3.2)	I:65 (1.2)	D:108 (2.0)
e	0 (0)	8 (2)	27 (1.7)	16 (1.8)	38 (2.3)	15 (2.6)	104 (1.9)		
f	0 (0)	2 (0.5)	26 (1.6)	15 (1.7)	40 (2.4)	18 (3.1)	101 (1.9)		
g	0 (0)	9 (2.3)	33 (2.0)	23 (2.6)	44 (2.7)	20 (3.4)	129 (2.4)		
h	0 (0)	3 (0.8)	20 (1.2)	17 (1.9)	12 (0.7)	7 (1.2)	59 (1.1)		
i	1 (0.5)	4 (1)	23 (1.4)	17 (1.9)	25 (1.5)	12 (2.1)	82 (1.5)		
j	0 (0)	3 (0.8)	20 (1.2)	8 (0.9)	20 (1.2)	13 (2.2)	64 (1.2)		
k	6 (2.7)	61 (15.3)	314 (19.3)	193 (21.7)	340 (20.5)	137 (23.6)	1,051 (19.5)		
l	3 (1.4)	26 (6.5)	133 (8.2)	90 (10.1)	185 (11.1)	67 (11.6)	504 (9.4)		
m	2 (0.9)	17 (4.3)	94 (5.8)	46 (5.2)	75 (4.5)	32 (5.5)	266 (4.9)		
n	1 (0.5)	6 (1.5)	32 (2.0)	18 (2.0)	29 (1.7)	11 (1.9)	97 (1.8)		
o	3 (1.4)	56 (14)	210 (12.9)	129 (14.5)	249 (15)	122 (21.0)	769 (14.3)		

a. V(v)S]SV(v) (v = Aux, perfective 'have')

Independent Clause:

(3) A gerland hadde he set upon his heed (Prol,666)]...he hadde...(Dd, 9 other MSS.)

Dependent Clause:

(4) Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne (PardT,451)]...hir children sholde...(Bo<sup>1</sup>, 9 other MSS.)

'Al' in (4) with inversion is originally an emphatic adverb in a concessive clause. In ten MSS. it is used as a conjunction followed by the ordinary word order.

b. SV(v)]V(v)S

Independent Clause:

(5) But unto which of hem I may nat telle (KnT,2353)]...may I...(Ad<sup>2</sup>, 9 other MSS.)

Dependent Clause:

(6) Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no lak (NPT,2844)]...foond she...(Ld<sup>1</sup>)

The number of instances of type a is only slightly larger than that of instances of type b. In order to elucidate the nature of scribal responses, however, we should find out the frequency of appearance of variants as against the poet's original. A. MacLeish counts the number of SV(v) and V(v)S orders in the four tales. <sup>(1)</sup> His statistics are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

	SV(v)	V(v)S
Independent	1,762(74.9%)	589(25.1%)
Dependent	1,512(93.8%)	100( 6.2%)
Total	3,274(82.6%)	689(17.4%)

Thus we obtain the following rates of appearance:

$$V(v)S]SV(v):12.5/689 = 1.8\% \quad SV(v)]V(v)S:10.4/3,274 = 0.3\%$$

$$\text{Independent}:10.0/589 = 1.7\% \quad \text{Independent}:9.9/1,762 = 0.6\%$$

$$\text{Dependent}:2.5/100 = 2.5\% \quad \text{Dependent}:0.5/1,512 = 0\%$$

It is evident that in dependent clauses V(v)S]SV(v) alteration occurs with comparatively high frequency while instances of SV(v)]V(v)S alteration are infrequent. This tendency seems to conform to the standard patterns of word order which had supposedly been

established by the fifteenth century.

c. XV]VX(X = O, C)

Independent Clause:

- (7) Therto he strong was as a champioun (Prol,239)]...was strong...(Dd, 17 other MSS.)

Dependent Clause:

- (8) Whan I yow hente and broghte out of the yerd (NPT,3422)]...hente yow...(Dl, Li)

d. VX]XV

Independent Clause:

- (9) Hasard is verray mooder of lesynges (PardT,591)]...verray mooder is...(Li)

Dependent Clause:

- (10) Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer (KnT,3086)]...yow served...(Ha<sup>3</sup>)

There is no knowing the rate of appearance of the variants of c and d types, since we have no statistics available as to the number of VX and XV orders in the four tales. However, according to S. Tatsumi's study of "General Prologue" VO order occupies 66% of verb-object clusters, and VC order 73 % of verb-complement clusters.<sup>64</sup> Given this and our statistics in Table 2, it may be concluded that XV]VX alterations surpass VX]XV in frequency. This again seems to indicate scribes' conscious or unconscious predilection for prose word order.

e. be ther]ther be

- (11) A Marchant was ther with a forked berd (Prol,270)]...ther was...(Dd, 15 other MSS.)

- (12) For yet ne was ther no man that hym sewed (NPT,3337)]...ther was...(Gg, Ha<sup>3</sup>)

Eighty-seven variants of this type occur in "General Prologue".

f. Vv]vV

- (13) Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne (KnT,1134)]...shal departe ... (Ra<sup>2</sup>, Ht, Ry<sup>1</sup>, Sl<sup>2</sup>, Tc<sup>1</sup>)

- (14) And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus (KnT,1586)]...hast chaunged...(Ad<sup>2</sup>, 15 other MSS.)

g. Participle be]be Participle

- (15) The which that dwellynge was with Emelye (KnT,1419)]...was dwellynge...(Ad<sup>2</sup>, 28 other MSS.)

- (16) That shal departed been among us thre (PardT,812)]...been departed...(Cn, 11 other MSS.)



Variants of e, f, and g types, which show a marked increase in the latter half of the century, are probably telling examples of scribes' reluctance to adopt highly poetic word order. Alterations in the opposite direction, e.g., vV]Vv, do occur as may be expected. But the number of those instances is negligibly small, and they are classified as "others".

h. NMod]ModN

(17) Than robes riche, or fithle, or gay sautrie (Prol,296)]...riche robes...(Dd,En<sup>1</sup>, Ds,Cn,Ma)

(18) By swiche ensamples olde maistow leere (NPT,3106)]...olde ensamples...(Mm,Dl,He)  
i. ModN]NMod

(19) Weren of his bittre, salte teeres wete (KnT,1280)]...teeres salte...(Ld<sup>2</sup>,Nl)

(20) And Cristes blessed body they torente (PardT,709)]...body blessed...(Ad<sup>2</sup>)

Alterations of word order are less frequent in the endocentric construction as in h and i than in the exocentric construction examined earlier. Furthermore it is noteworthy that ModN]NMod variants surpass NMod]ModN in absolute number. Many instances of the former are found in the alteration of Mod1-Mod2-N to the traditional Mod1-N-Mod2 common in poetry. It is assumed that scribes may have felt less hesitation in adopting this older order than in copying older and poetic orders in the exocentric construction. But here again we must take into account the rate of appearance of each variation. Tatsumi reports that 86% of attributive adjectives are placed before their nouns in "General Prologue".<sup>43</sup> This leads us to presume that NMod]ModN alterations are predominant over ModN]NMod in terms of percentage.

We have seen how scribes responded to Chaucer's poetic word order. Given that instances where prose orders have reverted to poetic ones are by no means negligible, we should avoid jumping to the conclusion that copyists invariably exhibited a preference for "more familiar" or prosaic orders. All the same it seems undeniable that there is an observable tendency for them to "prose" the poet's elaborately stylized lines. We will now focus on a body of minor, yet often semantically important, types of word order variants which do not involve "prosing" discussed so far.

j. Mod1 Mod2]Mod2 Mod1

(21) He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght (Prol,72)]...gentil parfit...(Ld<sup>2</sup>)

(22) Of faire, yonge, fresshe Venus free (KnT,2386)]...fresshe, yonge...(Ha<sup>3</sup>,Nl)

k. Left dislocation of Adv(Phr)

(23) Noght for youre boost he wole him no thyng hyde (PardT,764)]...no thyng him hyde (Fi,Ne,Cx<sup>1</sup>,Tc<sup>2</sup>)

(24) Was whilom dwellying in a narwe cotage (NPT,2822)]Whilom was... (Lc,Mg)

l. Right dislocation of Adv(Phr)

(25) But on his lady yet caste he his ye (KnT,2807)]...caste he yet... (Cn,Ma,Dl)

(26) Of this matiere, O Paul, wel kanstow trete (PardT,521)]O Paul, of this matiere... (Ne,Cx<sup>1</sup>,Tc<sup>2</sup>)

The dislocation of adverbs or adverbials is in fact by far the most frequent type of alteration. Left dislocation is twice as frequent as right dislocation. An account of this inclination is yet to be undertaken.

m. A & B)B & A (& = 'and', 'or', 'ne', etc.)

(27) To yeve and lene hym of his owene good (Prol,611)]...lene and yeve... (Ad<sup>3</sup>,Ra<sup>2</sup>,Ht,Tc<sup>1</sup>)

(28) Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were (KnT,1015)]...fully dede, ne fully quyke... (Ln,Ps)

n. Dislocation of elements in 'of' -Phr

(29) Bulles of popes and of cardynales (PardT,342)] Of popes bulles... (Cn,Ma)

(30) A col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee (NPT,3215)]...ful sly of iniquitee(Ha<sup>4</sup>)

o. Others

(31) Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon (Prol,629)]...lytarge, quyk-silver... (Dd, En<sup>1</sup>,Ds,Cn,Ma)

(32) For though so be that Mars is god of armes (KnT,2248)]...Mars that... (Bo<sup>1</sup>)

The alteration in (32) makes the line an anacoluthon.

3.

In verse the requirements of rhythm along with rime are constantly operative in the choice of word order. It is expected therefore that alteration of word order would inevitably change the rhythmic pattern of the verse line. Although prosodists seem to agree to disagree over Chaucer's meter, the traditional and prevailing theory, that the poet basically wrote in iambic pentameter, may be assumed for the sake of convenience.

We will now see how the variability of word order affects or does not affect scansion.

(33) <sup>x</sup>Of <sup>/</sup>grece, <sup>x</sup>whan she <sup>/</sup>dronken <sup>x</sup>hadde <sup>/</sup>hir draughte <sup>x</sup>(Prol,135)]  
<sup>x</sup>Of <sup>/</sup>grece, <sup>x</sup>whan she <sup>/</sup>hadde <sup>x</sup>dronken <sup>/</sup>hir draughte <sup>x</sup>(Cx<sup>1</sup>, 18 other MSS.)

(34) That <sup>x</sup>shewe <sup>/</sup>I first, my body to warente <sup>x</sup>(PardT,338)]  
<sup>x</sup>That <sup>/</sup>I shewe <sup>x</sup>first, my body to warente <sup>x</sup>(Dd, 13 other MSS.)

(35) Hir bord was served <sup>x</sup>moost <sup>/</sup>with whit and blak <sup>x</sup>(NPT,2843)]  
<sup>x</sup>Hir bord was <sup>/</sup>moost <sup>x</sup>served with whit and blak <sup>x</sup>(He, 7 other MSS.)

In the lines cited above, the alteration of word order seems to spoil iambs. Though it is possible to scan the variant in (34) as "That I shewe first, my body to warente," chances are that the stress on the verb is contextually more desirable, because obviously the pardoner here wants to emphasize his cunning action as a preacher rather than his own person.

The variant in (35) is a typical example of Lydgatian verse. In many variants, however, the rhythmic pattern seems to be kept intact.

- (36) His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly (Prol,610)]  
 His lord he koude wel plesen subtilly (Bo<sup>2</sup>, 14 other MSS.)
- (37) But this is yet the beste game of alle (KnT,1806)]  
 But yet is this the beste game of alle (Ad<sup>1</sup>, 17 other MSS.)
- (38) Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love (KnT,2038)]  
 Who shal be deed or elles slayn for love (En<sup>2</sup>, 14 other MSS.)

In (36) and (37), where two types of variation—the alteration of subject-verb order and the dislocation of an adverb—are combined, the original rhythm is preserved. The symmetrical interchange of words in (38) in no way affects the rhythmic pattern of the line.

The figures listed below give us some idea as to how frequently an iamb is marred by each type of variant. Only the variants supported by five or more MSS. are counted, and the figures should be understood as mere approximation: a. 28.4%, b. 31.7%, c. 69.2%, d. 69.0%, e.0%, f. 94.0%, g. 100%, h. 88.6%, i. 0%, j. 28.6%, k. 57.6%, l. 54.5%, m. 21.8%, n. 70.1%, o. 40.6%—on average 47.7%. In the variations of types f (Vv]vV), g (Participle be]be Participle), and h (NMod]ModN), the poetic rhythm seems to be almost invariably damaged. It would not be too much to say that many fifteenth century copyists paid little, if any, attention to the preservation of iambic meter when they adopted a prosaic arrangement of words.

#### 4.

Alteration of word order is expected to involve a change in the sense of a line. However, such instances are by no means numerous, accounting for well below 10% of all the variants.

- (39) And was a povre Persoun of a toun (Prol,478)]  
 And was a Persoun of a povre toun (Dd,En<sup>1</sup>,Ds,Cn,Ma)
- (40) Now with his love, now in his colde grave (KnT,2778)]  
 Now with his love, now colde in his grave (Cx<sup>1</sup>,Tc<sup>2</sup>,Fi)
- (41) Now lat us sitte and drynke, and make us merie (PardT,883)]

Now lat us drynke and sitte, and make us merie (Bw, 7 other MSS.)

The line in (40) is pathetically uttered by Arcite on his deathbed. With the adjective 'colde' dislocated, the variant makes slightly modified, but still good, sense. One of the two jubilant "riotoures" speaks (41) after they have stabbed their friend to death. In the variant reading, the two verbs are placed in reverse order, casually perhaps, thereby producing the effect of hysteron proteron.

The following variants may perhaps be classed as scribal errors.

- (42) For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,  
Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl (Prol, 694—95)]  
... Which he seyde that was Oure Lady veyl (Ln)

- (43) Thise riotoures thre of whiche I telle,  
Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,  
Were set hem in a taverne to drynke (PardT, 661—63)]  
... Were set in a taverne hem to drynke (En<sup>1</sup>, Ds)

- (44) Thou shalt namoore thurgh thy flaterye  
Do me to synge and wynke with myn ye (NPT, 3429—30)]  
... To do me synge and wynke with myn ye (Dl)

These variant readings, containing an anacoluthon which is more or less difficult, if not impossible, to construe, are mostly recorded in a single MS. and scarcely supported by others. We are left under the impression that scribal treatment is to a considerable extent careful and accurate, when it comes to the preservation of the original sense in the exemplar.

## 5.

G. Roscow discusses the interplay between syntax and stylistic values in Chaucer's poetry.<sup>(44)</sup> In the poet's verse lines we often come across a sentence in which an element normally placed in the latter part of the line is shifted to the front. Roscow writes, "The general effect of front-shifting is to give special emphasis to a word, which is usually the front-shifted item itself but can sometimes be another word in the sentence."<sup>(45)</sup>

- (45) Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore  
Encreeseth at his herte moore and moore (KnT, 2743—44)]  
The brest swelleth of Arcite, and the soore... (Ps)
- (46) His voys was murier than the murie orgon  
On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon (NPT, 2851—52)]

...That on messe-dayes in the chirche gon (Py)

In (45) the front-shifted verb serves to emphasize Arcite's death throes. But in its variant the sentence has a normal word order, though with an awkward discontinuity of 'of' -phrase. In Chaucer's verse as well as in other ME poems, it is not unusual to find an element within a clause shifted to a position before the clause marker. The relative clause in (46) is a case in point, and such a construction is termed "displacement" by Roscow. In the variant reading adopted by a single MS., the front-shifted adverbial phrase is put back in the clause.

Roscow singles out "broken order" and "discontinuity" as another set of artistic word order patterns giving variety to verse lines. Actually broken order is a subclass of discontinuity in which the separated elements are co-ordinate.<sup>(46)</sup>

(47) That al that Monday justen they and daunce (KnT, 2486)]

That al that Monday they justen and daunce (Fi)

(48) An oold man and a povre with hem mette (PardT, 713)]

An oold and a povre man with hem mette (Cp, 13 other MSS.)

(49) With vessels in hir hand of gold ful fyn (KnT, 2907)]

With vessels of gold in hir hand ful fyn (Cx<sup>1</sup>, He, Ht, Ne)

Lines (47) and (48) contain broken order, while (49) is an example of discontinuous 'of' -phrase. These techniques are ruined in the variants. In the variant of (49), however, the adjective remains in the rime position, thereby causing modifier-noun discontinuity.

Cross order, or chiasmus, is yet another rhetorical device favored by medieval poets. The effect of this construction is, generally considered, "to achieve variety and emphasis."<sup>(47)</sup>

(50) Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere (KnT, 1422)]

Wel koude he wode hewen, and water bere (Gl)

(51) Of alabastre whit and reed coral (KnT, 1910)]

Of whit alabastre and reed coral (Ne, Cx<sup>1</sup>, Tc<sup>2</sup>)

Roscow makes a suggestive comment on chiasmus in (50): "The cross order of objects in line 1422 does not particularly stand out in this description of Arcite, who has come 'disguised povrely' as a conventional hero of romance to serve in the court of Theseus. It is, in fact, of a piece with the simple diction in briefly conjuring up the world of popular romance, with its heroes like Havelok who are similarly 'myghty for the nones' and 'big of bones'. These lines echo in an appropriate context the style of *Havelok* and other romances in the English tradition, where cross order occurs a number of times as part of

the fabric of vigorous narrative. The stylistic function of cross order on this occasion is therefore simply its traditional propriety."<sup>18</sup> Such efforts of the poet seem to have been wasted in some MSS.

6.

The above discussion may be summarized as follows: 1. Word order variants increase sharply in number in the latter half of the fifteenth century. 2. Variants mostly appear in the central area of the verse and rarely destroy the rime scheme. 3. There is an observable tendency for scribes to alter poetic, and so sometimes difficult, lines into prosaic ones. 4. In these alterations the iambic rhythm is not infrequently at stake. 5. Instances are relatively rare where the sense of the original is affected. 6. But change of word order sometimes coarsens the texture of the poet's elaborate rhetoric.

Though our consideration of scribal variation in Chaucerian MSS. has been limited only to problems involving word order, it may be claimed that it has brought to light some intriguing aspects of *usus scribendi* of fifteenth century copyists.

#### NOTES

\* This article is based on a paper read at the fifth annual meeting of the Western Division of the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies held at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies on May 6, 1989. I appreciate valuable questions and suggestions from the floor. I am also indebted to Professors Atsumu Kanayama and Ian C. Stirk of Osaka University of Foreign Studies for improving my English.

- (1) Barry A. Windeatt, "The Scribes as Chaucer's Early Critics," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1, ed. Roy J. Percy (Norman: The New Chaucer Society, 1979) 136. For the variation of modal auxiliaries, see Shigeru Ono, "Chaucer's Variants and What They Tell Us—Fluctuation in the Use of Modal Auxiliaries," *Studies in English Literature* English number (1969):51—74.
- (2) Obviously we can hardly assume that every scribe was using one of the best early manuscripts as his exemplar. In many cases he may simply have been copying what he found in a text which already contained a considerable number of variants. But the likelihood of this does not mar the points of the discussion below. See Anne Hudson, "Tradition and Innovation in Some Middle English Manuscripts," *The Review of English Studies* n.s. 17(1966)361.
- (3) Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). Not a few textual critics claim that the Hengwrt MS. is closer to Chaucer's original than the Ellesmere MS. So far as word order is concerned, however, there are few discrepancies between them.
- (4) John M. Manly, and Edith Rickert, eds., *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*, 8 vols. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1940). We have avoided using their text for our purpose in the light of George Kane's animadversions on it. See "John M. Manly (1865—1940) and Edith Rickert (1871—1938)," *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers (Norman: Pilgrim, 1984)207—29.

- (5) The symbols for the MSS. are Manly and Rickert's. The dates of the MSS. are according to Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Allen, 1985) 321—25. The numbers of the MSS. are given in figures with decimals, because thirteen MSS. (denoted by a triangle in the table) lack one or more tales. Each of these MSS. is counted as 0.2—0.8 in proportion to the length of the tale(s) lacking. Twenty-four fragmentary MSS. contain none of the four tales.
- (6) Shigeru Ono, *A Road to Philology* (in Japanese) (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1981) 145.
- (7) "Although Ch is late, its ultimate derivation, perhaps through several intermediaries, from a MS of the Hg and El type seems to appear in survivals of their language." Manly and Rickert, Vol. 1, 88.
- (8) Windeatt 136.
- (9) All line references are to *The Riverside Chaucer*. Variant spellings are disregarded and made to conform to those of the edition. Underlinings are mine.
- (10) Windeatt 136.
- (11) Andrew MacLeish, *The Middle English Subject-Verb Cluster* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969). His base text is Robinson's first edition.
- (12) Shinya Tatsumi, "Observations on the Sentence Patterns of Chaucer's Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*," *Osaka Shogyo Daigaku Ronshu* (Osaka U of Commerce) 26, 27 (1968) 314, 316. He uses Skeat's edition.
- (13) Tatsumi 319.
- (14) Gregory Roscow, *Syntax and Style in Chaucer's Poetry* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981). Lines given by way of illustration in the following discussion are originally cited by Roscow except (46), but he does not deal with their variants. In her review of the monograph, Joyce Bazire points out the necessity of taking into account the disagreement among MSS. on word order. *Medium AEvum* 52 (1983): 131—32.
- (15) Roscow 12.
- (16) Roscow 22.
- (17) Roscow 46.
- (18) Roscow 46.

(1990. 1. 10 受理)